



# IOWA PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING

## PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

### *Tracking Aids in Emergency Response During Boil Advisory*

On June 1, 2018 a failure in the membrane filtration system at the Creston water treatment plant resulted in potentially unsafe drinking water for 26,344 Iowans. The affected water supply served 7,834 customers of the Creston Water Works and 18,510 customers served by the Southern Iowa Rural Water Association (SIRWA).

#### **What was the Problem/Situation?**

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issued a drinking water advisory for customers to boil water because it had the potential to contain disease-causing organisms. The Creston Water Works serves the City of Creston and SIRWA encompasses five separate public drinking water systems serving residents in unincorporated areas of 14 Iowa counties. The Creston water treatment plant supplies water to over two-thirds of SIRWA customers.

#### **How was Iowa Public Health Tracking Involved?**

As part of the National Tracking Network's required Nationally Consistent Data Measures (NCDM), Iowa has received and published data from the DNR's Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS) since 2014.

Part of this data sharing agreement is to use these data in times of disaster or emergency response. The data is collected annually and processed into a data mart that feeds the public portal and may be queried for data requests.

#### **What Action was Taken to Solve the Problem/Situation?**

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH), where the Iowa Tracking program resides, began assisting the DNR with the water emergency and utilized the tracking data to obtain the number of connections and estimated population served by SIRWA. These data were imperative to have immediately so that the IDPH incident command system could provide the most effective guidance possible.

The efforts of the Iowa Tracking program, in partnership with the IDPH incident command system staff and the Department of Natural Resources, provided rapid emergency and public health information to 26,344 residents during this water crisis. Technology, staff expertise, and strong working relationships that were built during earlier tracking program activities helped assess the potential effects on residents and to prevent health problems.

